This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

A 987,147

PROPERTY OF
University of Michigan Libraries
1817
ARTES SCIENTIA VERITAS

BY GEORGE STERLING

The Caged Eagle and Other Poems
Crown 8vo. *Cloth* 1.50

The Testimony of the Suns and Other Poems. *Crown* 8vo. *Cloth* $1.25

A Wine of Wizardry and Other Poems
Crown 8vo. *Cloth* 1.25

The House of Orchids and Other Poems
Crown 8vo. *Cloth* 1.25

Beyond the Breakers and Other Poems
Crown 8vo. *Cloth* 1.25

Yosemite. *Crown* 8vo. *Full Paper Boards, Illustrated* .75

Ode on the Opening of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. Limited edition on hand-made paper and the type distributed. *Small* 4to. *Full Hand-Made Paper over Boards* 1.75

The Evanescent City, with Illustrations by Francis Bruguiere. 4to. *Boards.* .75

A. M. ROBERTSON
San Francisco

THE CAGED EAGLE

AND OTHER POEMS

THE CAGED EAGLE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

GEORGE STERLING

AUTHOR OF

"THE TESTIMONY OF THE SUNS"
"A WINE OF WIZARDRY"
"THE HOUSE OF ORCHIDS"
"BEYOND THE BREAKERS"
"YOSEMITE"

A. M. ROBERTSON
SAN FRANCISCO
1916

COPYRIGHT
1916
BY A. M. ROBERTSON

TO

RAPHAEL WEILL

CHEVALIER OF THE LEGION OF HONOR

T2 8
ST 378 C

English
Seven Gables
10-5-50
72250

CONTENTS

PAGE

THE CAGED EAGLE AND OTHER POEMS:

THE WITCH 9
TO TWILIGHT 14
HENRI 16
CONSPIRACY 19
INDIAN SUMMER 22
BALLAD OF THE FATAL WORD 23
ON THE SALE OF THE LOVE-LETTERS OF A DEAD POET . 27
MEDIATRIX 28
A DOG WAITS HIS DEAD MISTRESS 30
HUMILITY IN ART 32
AN AUTUMN THRUSH 34
THE FALL OF THE YEAR 36
OCTOBER 38
IN AUTUMN 40
THE CAGED EAGLE 42
TIME AND TEARS 45
TO AN OLD NURSE 46
TO THE MUMMY OF THE LADY ISIS (In the Bohemian Club, San Francisco) 49
THE RAMPARTS AND THE ROSE 50
ON A PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN 52
THE TRYST 54
A YELLOW ROSE 58
SHAKESPEARE 61
THE SHADOW OF NIRVANA 65
THE RETURN 66
MOLOCH 68

© 10-9-50 MT

CONTENTS

PAGE

THE CAGED EAGLE AND OTHER POEMS—*Continued:*

THREE SONNETS ON SLEEP 70
MAN 73
ON A CITY STREET 74
ILLUSION 75
ESSENTIAL NIGHT 76
THE GLEANER 77
CALIFORNIA 78

POEMS ON THE PANAMA-PACIFIC EXPOSITION:

ODE ON THE OPENING 87
THE BUILDERS 102
THE EVANESCENT CITY 104

PERSONAL POEMS:

FRANK UNGER 109
TO XAVIER MARTINEZ, PAINTER 110
THE LIGHT-GIVER 111
TO MARGARET ANGLIN 114

ON THE GREAT WAR:

THE SONG OF THE VALKYRS 117
THE DREAM OF WHILHELM II 120
EARTH'S ANTHEM 121
TO GERMANY 122
BETRAYAL 127
BELGIUM, AUGUST, 1914 129
ENGLAND, AUGUST, 1914 130
TO THE WAR-LORDS 131
THE WAR-GOD 134
THE LITTLE FARM 135
THE HOUSE OF WAR 136
"AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING" 137
TO BELGIUM 138

CONTENTS

PAGE

ON THE GREAT WAR—*Continued:*

THE TWO PRAYERS 139
AFTERMATH 140
THE WAR-MACHINE 141
BOMBARDMENT 142
GERMANY 143
THE DEATH-CHORDS 144
THE FEAST 145
WAR'S MUSIC 146
THE AEROPLANE 147
BEFORE DAWN 148
THE TURK 149
THE NEW KINGS 150
TO FRANCE 151
THE NIGHT OF MAN 152
TO THE ALLIED ARMS 153
THE BATTLEFIELD AT NIGHT 154
KINGSHIP 155
THE DEATH OF RUPERT BROOKE 156
THE HELOTS 157
THE CROWN-PRINCE AT VERDUN 158
BEFORE DAWN IN AMERICA 159
GUN-PRACTICE 160
TO ENGLAND 161
CIVILIZATION AT BAY 162
THE DAY OF DECISION 163
BROADWAY NEW YORK, 1916 164
THE "LUSITANIA 165
WAR, THE PAST 166
WAR, THE PRESENT 167
WAR, THE FUTURE 168

THE WITCH

Erik the prince came back from sea,
His galley low with spoil—
Armor and silks and weeping slaves,
Silver and wine and oil.

And there was one that did not weep,
But laughed in Erik's face,
And 'tween the helmsman and the mast
Strode with a leopard's grace.

Her hair was darker than the night
In which our foemen sink;
Her limbs were whiter than the milk
Of which our maidens drink.

THE WITCH

Her lips were coral-red; her eyes
  As shoaling seas were green.
She wore cupped gold on either breast
  And one blue gem between.

And cross her path or say her word
  No man save Erik dared;
But all day long men stood apart,
  And knit their brows, and stared.

And they have made the harbor strand,
  And all have seen her charms;
Erik hath borne her to the shore
  Uplifted in his arms.

Soon in the council-hall they stood
  Of Gudrod, sire and king,
Who bade grey Sigurd, seer and skald,
  The prince's valor sing.

Long looked the skald on Erik's face
And face of her he led;
Then snatched the blade from Erik's belt
And stabbed the captive dead.

Erik hath sprung at Sigurd's throat,
But four lords hold him fast,
With eyes that glare on nothingness,
And straining arms upcast.

There is hot tumult in the place,
With clash of steel and word,
Until in thunder over all
The king's deep voice is heard.

"Assoil thee, skald! and give good cause
For this that thou hast done,
Or ravens for thy sightless eyes
Shall fight ere set of sun!"

The skald stood silent and apart,
Then smiled upon his deed.
"It is that we bleed not," he said,
"That she in time does bleed.

From isles of sin that one was brought,
Far westward and to-south;
She whispered in a witch's tongue
And hath a harlot's mouth.

O Gudrod! in thy grandsire's time
Such one across the sill
Was led into the royal house
To love, and plot her will.

Thou hast heard sung what strong one's death
Her cunning did devise,
With sorcery of philtred glance,—
With promise of her eyes.

Thou hast heard sung the woes she wrought
  With swords of jealous men:
Know now that in this serpent slain
  That poison came again!

I have done well by thee and thine—
  Thy daughters, lords and son;
And many hearts shall go unpierced,
  For that I pierced this one."

He made an end, and smiled aloof . . . .
  The great king bent his head . . . .
Then, gazing long on him that smiled,
 "Thou hast done well," he said.

And from the sorceress the blood
  Crept slowly on the stone,
And pointed like a scarlet arm
  At Gudrod on his throne.

TO TWILIGHT

Linger, we pray,
Shy mother of the white and earliest star!
For in thy keeping are
The Dreams that suffer not the light of day—
Dim presences, that find us from afar.

O soundless feet,
Between the night and sunset hesitant!
The cricket's eager chant
And voice of some faint bell, remotely sweet,
Alone await thee, clear and consonant.

Sing to thyself
A song as pure, as low, as delicate,
Ere music seem too late,
Or yet the moonray seek the hidden elf,
Or mute, the night fall uncompassionate.

TO TWILIGHT

We shall not hear;
But in the heart an echo swiftly flown
Shall touch us from thine own,
And voices of the past, forlorn and clear,
Shall haunt us from the days that love hath known . . . .

So hast thou come,
Whose benediction ceases not for night,
To close the gates of light,
And tell, from fields for thee a moment dumb,
That age-old pain of Beauty and her flight.

HENRI

To-night I drifted to the restaurant
We scribblers fancy, finding it unchanged,
Save that I saw no more my dapper friend,
The waiter Henri. When I asked for him,
"Gone to the war," another waiter said . . . .

"Gone to the war!" That man so mild a part
Of peace and its traditions! Debonnair,
Childlike, alert, and none too strong, we'd thought.
He who had served so deftly, and, secure,
Had walked the beaten path and sheltered ways—
He now was with the cannon and the kings!
Gentle he was, and ever with a smile:
Ah! wears he still a smile? For now his soul
Has taken iron, and stood forth austere,
Made suddenly acquainted with despair,
And pain, and horror, and the timeless things.

HENRI

I called him once, and he unhurried came;
And now he hurries at Another's beck—
Ancient, enormous, immemorial War—
And, by the trampled valley of the Meuse,
Finds a red service in the day's vast hall
Of thunders, and in night's domain of death
Attends, unless he too be of the dead.
And I sit here beneath the harmless lights!

O simple soul War's hands laid hold upon
And led to devastations, and the shock
Of legions, and the rumble of huge guns,
And crash and lightning of the rended shells
Above a region veined and pooled with blood!
You now have part with all intrepid youth
That took, in ages past, the battle-line,
And in a mighty Cause had faith and love.
You are the hero now, and I the sheep!
And quietly beneath the pleasant lamps

HENRI

I sit, and wonder how you fare to-night.
It's midnight now in France. Perhaps you find
Uneasy slumber; or perhaps, entrenched,
You wait the night-attack across the rain.
Perhaps, my friend, they've made your bed with
spades!
And I sit moody here, remembering,
As careless men and women rise and go,
I never asked you if you had a wife.

CONSPIRACY

I had a dream of some great house of stone,
  Not dark, but open to the northern ray.
  Beneath a cold and somber sky it lay,
Soundless and secret, mournful and alone.

It had no prospect save upon the sky—
  Set in a great and old and windy wood.
  Profound its essence seemed, but not of good;
Yet had one asked, none could have answered why.

A single door it had, that faced the east,
  Ponderous, brazen and without a lock.
  I thought, as stubbornly I dared to knock,
That past the sill a cryptic murmur ceased.

CONSPIRACY

And none said "Enter!" yet I entered there,
  And saw that house was all one marble room,
  Austere, and given to the dead, for whom
The walls held chiseled couches, scant and bare.

Arctic, immense, no pillar stayed that hall,
  And from the north the melancholy light
  Sank through translucent windows, vast and white,
On alabaster niche and frozen pall.

Rigid they lay, that session of the dead,
  From whom the hands of Change seemed held a space,
  With folded arms and enigmatic face,
Marmorean, as portion of their bed.

And half I thought that wafts of presence stole
  On the urned air significantly still,
  Upon whose wintry crystal crept a chill
That fell not on the body but the soul.

CONSPIRACY

That air unused, it seemed to crave escape
  From that sad hall, to be a wind again.
  I felt a terror of those tranquil men,
And feared the wisdom of each silent shape.

Whereat I turned, importunate, to win
  My way to life's complacencies once more;
  Which done, behind the safety of the door
Again I heard that muttering begin.

INDIAN SUMMER

Come with me to some woodland where the chill
  Of autumn stirs with ecstasy the day,
  Or where the tranquil edges of a bay
Shoal to untroubled turquoise, pure and still;
There let immortal Beauty have her will
  In that hushed temple of the year's delay,
  Crowning thy heavens with her holy ray,
While the heart leaps and eyes unbidden fill.

Assent thou not unto the year's "Alas!"
  Tho all that is depart and leave no trace.
Suffice it, ere the lonely vision pass,
  That loveliness be given for a space,
When, set with stars, the soul's deep waters glass
  The glory and the sorrow of her face.

BALLAD OF THE FATAL WORD

The boulders lie along the downs;
  The turf is hard between;
The Channel waves are low this dawn,
  And turf and wave are green.

Now three come down from out the wood,
  And cross the verdant span;
And two have swords and one a rose—
  A man, a maid, a man.

Beside the sea the turf is flat,
  With space for one to spring
To right or left, and in or out,
  With steel upraised to sting.

BALLAD OF THE FATAL WORD

"Have at thee, Carew!" cries the one:
"Defend thyself!" it came.
The blades against the rising sun
Make sudden wands of flame.

Now let the timid curlew fly
And let the gull veer past,
For point is set to truceless point
And doubt shall end at last.

And long below a windy sky
The dancing rapiers blaze—
The grating edge, the slender death
That seeks an hundred ways.

And neither hath the vantage yet,
Nor do the Fates decide
Above those lists where pride and youth
Encounter youth and pride.

Then sudden on the breast of one
  There lies a scarlet stain.
'Tis but a touch, yet at the sight
  The maiden cries, "Duane!"

And in that voice, for all to know,
  Are love and bitter fear;
And neither knew, until she cried,
  Which one to her was dear.

And at that voice the one she named
  Stands dazed, for instant weal,
Till in that heart where joy is crowned
  Slips the dethroning steel.

He had not struck had he but known
  How bliss strikes unawares;
Now she is on her knees at last,
  With unavailing pray'rs.

Upon the breast of him that fell
  Her red rose laid she then;
And unto him whose blade was red
  She never spoke again.

ON THE SALE OF THE LOVE-LETTERS OF A DEAD POET

The fond and foolish lines writ for the one—
  On those the gaping many have their will.
  About the grave contending voices shrill,
In profanation of a trust undone:
The dead man sleeps, and protest has he none
  On those that soil his passion's memory still.
  Where geese may crane before the sullied sill,
The heart's poor shrine lies open to the sun.

There is no grace of shadow for this flow'r,
  No balm of silence for this outraged love,
    Laid bare to leering peasants for a doom.
The ghouls are out before the midnight hour;
  The buzzards gather in the skies above;
    The stained hyena snuffles in the tomb.

MEDIATRIX

Voiceless, we hear thee plead,
  O Music, bond unseen
  That God hath made between
His silence and our need.

Tho Heaven have graver speech
  Than thy communing tongue,
  Yet save as thou hast sung
Its angels may not teach.

What none shall ever say
  With sound of speech, say thou,
  Upon whose holy brow
Falls now our lesser day.

MEDIATRIX

In thy compassion be
  A refuge from the mirth
  And babble of mad earth,
Till all are lost in thee.

From ways to us unshown,
  Grant us, the dumb and blind,
  The word that grief would find,
The word that love hath known.

Thy voice of joy and pain
  All worlds and times allot—
  Which lacking, love stands not,
Nor Heaven to lose or gain.

A DOG WAITS HIS DEAD MISTRESS

Lift not thy head at some familiar sound:
  It is not she, the comrade taken hence.
The solitary pathway she has found
    Gives not upon the sense.

Be patient, for thou shalt forget at last—
  Forget, and in thy fashion be at peace:
Here in my changeless valley of the Past
    Her voice will never cease.

O happy! that thy brown and mournful eyes
  Look only on the barriers that are!
But mine remember how the solemn skies
    Shut westward on her star.

A DOG WAITS HIS DEAD MISTRESS

It is not thine to wonder, faithful friend,
If Morning close the vigil and the pain,—
If doubt and loss be given for an end
And sorrow to our gain.

It is not thine to hunger for her light,
And know, as I, how long the watch must be
Till the grey sentry hear upon the night
The word that sets him free.

Nay—lift no more thine eager head to greet
Her presence in the garden or the hall:
It is in Paradise the soundless feet
Fare, if they fare at all.

HUMILITY IN ART

What do they know who did not see the Dream?
O brother! tho men praise thee and acclaim,
They did not see the vision and the flame,
Nor saw the wings of Beauty lift and gleam.

Thou to thyself in silence shalt confess
How scant thy tidings of that angel are
That blazed upon thee like a holy star,
Shaking all Heaven with its loveliness.

But thou has seen—and what thy tale to men?
The vouchsafed Presence canst thou render whole?—
The iris of her footprints in thy soul?—
The Wind that passed and cometh not again?

HUMILITY IN ART

Be meek, who saw'st the marvel of her face,
  Nor canst restore her semblance to the throng!
  Bow down, who knowest how thy sorry song
Shall never be the witness of her grace!

From that high garden where thy feet were led,
  What evanescent lilies dost thou bring!
  Thou who hast heard the seas of Heaven sing,
Return an echo of their quiring fled!

Is it for these that thou wouldst take thy throne,
  Or mail thy spirit with indifference—
  The stammered words, the music dulled by sense,
The tawdry colors and the mangled stone?

AN AUTUMN THRUSH

Like some regret that, half-forgot,
  Gropes into memory,
Here in a shadow-chosen spot
  Thy music steals to me.

To soft for joy, too mild for grief,
  Within the wood it dies—
Beauty too wayward and too brief
  To grace our noonday skies.

The dusk enfolds me, and the year
  Stands at the western gate.
Thy song, the symbol of a tear,
  Echoes the cry "Too late!"

AN AUTUMN THRUSH

"Too late!" cries back the conscious heart,
  As one that in dismay
Had seen the affronted gods depart
  And could not bid them stay;

Nor could retain from Time's control
  A moment or a flow'r,
Save when in woodlands of the soul
  Such strains endure an hour.

THE FALL OF THE YEAR

It is that season when the soul must know
  The challenge of Transition, she who lays
    On the reluctant days
The burden of departure and its woe.

And all spring sowed in ecstasy and tears
  Reaps autumn now with sorrow and a smile.
    The world's heart rests awhile,
Yet knows the mournful music of the years.

The myriad wings beat south, the myriad flow'rs
  Have said farewell to sun and rain and wind;
    Here sense and spirit find
That change alone has empire of the hours.

Nay, tho the gaze turn backward at the gate,
The going-forth is certain. In each breast
What mutinies attest
The ceaseless march of all things to their fate!

Unto what Land, on what dim road compelled,
Depart, unlingering, the bidden feet?
What memories repeat
That life is exile and a home withheld?

OCTOBER

No voice hath said the mighty word "Farewell!"
What spirit, then, fills with a sweet despair
And swiftly broken spell
The crimson gardens of the mourning air?

The clouds go forth on seas without a port;
Back unto Earth, its mother, sinks the leaf.
Lone are the days and short
That hold at heart this ecstasy and grief.

Now Sorrow hath her pure and perfect part,
Turning great eyes on Beauty's dear excess,
Till, desperate, the heart
Aches for some wild and unknown happiness.

OCTOBER

Tho Time have shown us that it is not here—
The joy that stirs our hunger—still we wait.
Its iris in the tear
Gives Hope her haven and our dreams their gate.

Now find we, tho the guerdon be forgot,
A glory set beyond us, and a call
That cries that we are not
As clouds that vanish or as leaves that fall.

IN AUTUMN

Mine eyes fill, and I know not why at all.
Lies there a country not of time and space
Some fair and irrecoverable place
I roamed ere birth and cannot now recall?—
A land where petals fall
On paths that I shall nevermore retrace?

Something is lacking from the wistful bow'rs,
And I have lost that which I never had.
The sea cries, and the heavens and sea are sad,
And Love goes desolate, yet is not ours.
Brown Earth alone is glad,
Robing her breast with fallen leaves and flow'rs.

IN AUTUMN

High memories stir; the spirit's feet are slow,
In nameless fields where tears alone are fruit.
And voices of the wind alone transmute
The music that I lost so long ago.
I stand irresolute,
Lonely for some one I shall never know.

THE CAGED EAGLE

Dost hear the west wind calling thee afar,
  O thou that hast beheld the night withdrawn,
  And past the crystal thresholds of the dawn
Soared on the pathway of the morning star?

O'er what cold forests and what granite hills
  Were once thy roads, in days remote from this?
  What torrents knew thee and what valleys miss
The shadow of thy pinion on their rills?

Does no mate mourn thee, faithful to thee yet,
  Deep in the wilderness where men are few,
  Whose wings, now tireless on the eternal blue,
Would fold by thine on some snow-parapet?

Or was it thine the bitter coasts to know,
  Where the profound Atlantic thunders welled
  To walls from which thine ageless eyes beheld
The northern ocean foaming far below?

Thy mate alone might share thy towering flight,
  On equal wing in lonely heavens borne,
  And rest with thee, waiting the distant morn,
On pinnacles made silent by the night.

Here is no sea, nor wood of western leaf,
  Nor mountains where the wind is on the snow:
  Before thy prisoned gaze thy jailors go,
Curious, careless, knowing not thy grief.

The seasons of thy liberty are fled,
  And hours when thou wast comrade of the cloud.
  Now vultures are companions, and the crowd,
Long with the vision of thy bondage fed.

THE CAGED EAGLE

What music here shall mingle with thy dreams,
  Or grace the years in which thou still must pine?
  The song of tempest-halting firs was thine,
And the ascending voice of many streams.

And men have brought thee unto this at length,
  Tho "Freedom! freedom!" seemed thy native cry.
  Lost are the ancient eyries on the sky,
The azure lanes, the sunlight in its strength.

Yet look on me, and one thy gaze shall find
  Freeborn, but doomed awhile thy fate to share—
  Whose wings, as thine, ache for a wider air
And solitudes august with stars and wind.

TIME AND TEARS

Ere the bent skies were soft with afternoon,
  A cloud crept up those arching walls of day
  And like a pall upon the heavens lay,
Casting a shadow on the fields of June.
Then the tyrannic winds arose, and soon,
  Like eagles harrying a helpless prey,
  Drove its dark pinions on that azure way
Foretrodden by the white, belated moon.

And now far down the royal West it lies,
  Where its bright sisters in the sunset float,—
    While the first voices of the twilight call.
A dweller for a little in our skies,
  How still it seems, how tender and remote,
    Like some old grief that time has rendered small!

TO AN OLD NURSE

Ever the thrush, on days like these of June,
  Sings to the dead, as leafy shadows veer,
Swung by the slow decline of afternoon:
    The dead folk do not hear.

There go the unmeaning ages as the hours;
  Absolved of Time, they reckon not his flight.
Compassionately starred by lowly flow'rs,
    Lies an unlifting night.

They are made silent in a silent place,
  Abiding past our gratitude and tears;
Nor shall our music touch with choral grace
    Their sleep's unnoted years.

TO AN OLD NURSE

Better, perhaps, no voice importunate
  Deliver at the bourn of their repose
The certain and immutable "Too late!"
    No living heart but knows.

Yet there, of those who lie so dreamless now,
  Is one whose love I knew in seasons past:
O warden of my youngest dreams! O thou
    I reckon with at last!

How should a child be conscious of such care?
  A heedless boy have gratitude? Ah, yes!
Yet still the heart of memory wakes aware,
    Sad for old thanklessness.

And now, to have thee know the full regret
  For thanks unfelt, undreamt-of and unsaid!
Elder and lessoned, now the eyes are wet
    Above the gentle dead.

TO AN OLD NURSE

There is no mound to tell where thou dost sleep:
O watcher by the bed, lone sentinel
Of long-gone midnights desolate and deep,
I know thou sleepest well!

TO THE MUMMY OF THE LADY ISIS

IN THE BOHEMIAN CLUB, SAN FRANCISCO

No bird shall tell thee of the seasons' flight:
  Sealed are thine ears that now no longer list.
  The little veins of temple and of wrist
Are food no more for sleepless love's delight,
And crumbling in the sessions of thy night,
  Pylon and sphinx shall be as fleeting mist.
  Bitter with natron are the lips that kissed,
And shorn of dreams the spirit and the sight.

Ah! dust misused! better to feed the flow'r,
Than grace the revels of an alien hour,
  When babe or lord wake never to caress
    The bosom where unerring Death hath struck
    And milkless breasts that give the ages suck—
  Stilled in the slumber that is nothingness.

THE RAMPARTS AND THE ROSE

The king came back from war with slaves and spoil,
  And said, "A vaster palace must there be
  Than where my fathers dwelt." So purposed he,
And set a captive nation to the toil.

And arch on arch and wall by nightless wall
  The royal eyries towered to the sun . . .
  The years were long before the task was done
And captains feasted in the banquet hall.

Then to his youngest poet said the king,
  "Behold the magnitude of mine estate!
  The courts, the lions graven at the gate,
The armies vassal to my ramparts! Sing!

THE RAMPARTS AND THE ROSE

"Sing the strong towers basaltic and sublime!
  Sing the high walls whose strength shall make
    my fame
  A star of legend and immortal flame,
And house my princes to the snows of Time!"

And the red lords kept silence for the lay;
  The sceptred king smiled proudly on the queen;
  But the mad poet, willful and serene,
Sang of a rose whose life was for a day . . . .

Of all the pomp abides nor gate nor tow'r;
  But o'er the ruins bloom the roses still,
  And desert folk, when the long nights are chill,
Sing yet the song he fashioned for the flow'r.

ON A PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN

This is the patient face to which was given
A touch of the eternal. Here is housed
Pain that is question, question that is pain,
And on those shoulders, for our sake, was set
The Government. For he was of that line
Whose Age lays mighty hands upon its son
And leads him to its morning. From those eyes,
Steady with high solemnities of grief,—
Weary, undisillusioned and august,
Gazed hope, and charity, and faith in man.
No fugitive from bleak reality,
He faced his task, and made the honest light
Sufficient to his need, and that withdrawn,
He on the deepest midnight found a star.
Calm, tender, undismayed, out of such stuff
Was framed a nation's guide on wastes of war,
And on that brow, furrowed, invincible,

ON A PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN

Were laid the old simplicities of strength.
Not twice, in many years, shall Time so grant
An Elder Brother such as he, who now,
In this presentment of a perished day,
Looks forth from deep and covenanting eyes,
As one that meets across the faithless years
The same world-sorrow in the gaze of Christ.

THE TRYST

Three are the headstones where I paused to-day
And read the letters that the lichen blurred.
The afternoon was still. The fallen leaves
Gave each its little whisper, trodden on,
And overhead, in maple, beech and oak,
The autumnal courts were very beautiful.

In that old graveyard, half a mile from sea,
I wandered pensive, scanning here and there
The crumbling, marble archives of the dead—
They that had built the fortunes of the port—
And read how good and great most men had been,
And how resigned—or so the tablets claimed—
Their wives had been to sleep the final sleep;
And some had had two wives, and one man four.

Then, as the sun was low, and smouldering clouds
Made an effulgent transept of the west,
I came to those three headstones. "John Devore,
Died August second, eighteen eighty-six,"
The first one read. The second: "Ruth Devore,
The wife of John Devore. Died April ninth,
In eighteen thirty-five." The third stone said:
"Allan Devore, the son of John Devore
And Ruth, his wife. Died June the twenty-first,
In eighteen thirty-seven, aged five."
And on the last two stones the moss was old.

I stood awhile and thought: "Ah! John Devore!
How long they must have seemed, those fifty years!
I do not know what rest or toil was yours,
What smiles or tears, for that half-century;
But surely on your silences they came,
And on your quiet hour, and in your dreams—
The wife and little son. So often thus

They must have stood, mute haunters of your life!
Oh! came they hand in hand, and did you weep?
And as the years crept onward, did they wait
Beside you at your tasks, and when the fire
Was on the hearth, were they not near at hand,
Drawing your gaze from sordid circumstance?—
The holy dead, august and beautiful!

"And days were years, and years were weariness,
And you grew old, and they were ever young,
Reminding you from many lovely things,
From rose and bird and cloud and pathless snow,
Of all the loveliness that once was theirs—
Ah! changeless still, and you so changed at last!
And the green earth swung on beneath the sun,
Noisy with life, and men fulfilled their ends,
As monarchs died, and fleets and thrones were lost,
And great wars shook the world. But peace was
theirs,

Still warbled over by the mating thrush—
O refuge unprofaned! O quiet dust!

"Did hunger for another home and love
Gnaw at your heart? If so, you bore the pain.
Habit's erasure, and the secret moth
In memory's dim arras, all that fight
Against the silent tenure of our dead,
They wrought in vain. So now you slumber too
And are yourself a mystery. The year,
The month, the day, the hour, the minute came.
Ah! John Devore! was there a meeting then?"

A YELLOW ROSE

Sad Autumn is the miser of thy gold;
But dead and meek
Thy petals speak
More than thy beauty told.

Now art thou sister of the wind and dew—
All fleeting things
Whose rainbow wings
Depart to come anew.

They make a fountain of the funeral urn—
Fragrance and tint
That, passing, hint
They pass but to return.

We find a myriad glimmerings of Truth;
Her perfect face
Withholds its grace,
Granting the heart its youth.

The deathless lyric ever on her tongue
Bestows a word;
The rest, unheard,
To alien skies is sung.

And so by touch and shadow, glimpse and gleam,
We know what path
Her passion hath
On heavens and hearts that dream.

And know that change is best, despite its pain:
On custom's rust
And Beauty's dust
Falls the renewing rain.

A YELLOW ROSE

Wherefore his wings, except the swallow flew?
Joy's thrall is brief,
But that of grief
Is made as transient too.

Either were not, were either evermore.
The flower soon dies,
But soon the sighs
End, that we sighed therefor.

SHAKESPEARE

Weigh you the worth and honor of a king
So great as our dread father in a scale
Of common ounces? Will you with counters sum
The past proportion of his infinite?

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

There burst a mighty morning on the world,
After a night so long it seemed an age.
An age it was. Then, romping in the sun,
Came youthful giants down the Singing Way,
And one, the tallest, leapt aside and set
A magic trumpet to his lips, and blew,
And we who listen hear the clarion yet.

Then, at the sweet compulsion of that sound,
The land was thronged with visions. Years that were
Gave back their paladins and queens who wept.

Kings cried to kings, extending shadowy swords
O'er phantom armies. Heroes, councillors,
Mingled with drabs and ruffians, as the Past
A gleaming pageant, swirled in rainbow-mist
Before the Present, soon to be the same.
What an array was there! What shifting forms,
Children of genius and a little ink!

The Trumpeter is dust, but they remain
Part of mankind forever. As the sun
He touched all things with equal ray, and set.
Like one sent as a spy from other worlds,
To tell our best and worst, he came. Judge you
How well he saw, who seems a Titan boy
Pelting the world with jewels and with filth,
Or as a seraph wandering in the stews,
And half at home there. This was he so swift
To flatter kings, then jeer the sceptred blood
With its mortality. And this was he

SHAKESPEARE

Who loved the common man enough, perhaps,
But failed not to remind him of his stink.
He knew the human heart as misers know
Their gold, and told its currents for all Time—
The unswerving tides of Nature and her plan.
He was an empire, with its plains and peaks.
He was an ocean, and the sky above.

Some are who say: "He was content to carve
His marbles from the quarry of the Past,
Nor told us of his time nor times to be,
Concerned to please the rabble and the court—
For all his wisdom missing, as we know
The fiery vision of democracy."
But this our King of Song was never come
To set the wandering thunders of the world
To music and to meaning. Not for him
The tribune's sword, the fasces of reform:
Leave those to men with hands—our god had wings.

Nor think him lapped in self, who all his days
Flouted the harlot Fame. His faults were there,
But at their worst as spots upon the sun.
He was the race—a cosmos in himself,
Full of small errors and large excellence.
Be proud, O men! that you are of his blood,
Who well might be this earth's ambassador
To haughty worlds and stars of whitest fire.

THE SHADOW OF NIRVANA

Hast ever wakened when the dark was deep,
  Nor known thyself, nor where thou wast, nor why?
  Unquestioned then the drowsy soul may lie,
Somewhere between reality and sleep,
Nor feel the tides of Time and matter sweep—
  Held for a little from the clamorous "I",—
  Pure being, freed of memory and its sigh,
Too far in utter peace to smile or weep.

'Tis but a moment's freedom: soon the mind
  Hears the recalling bugle, and the brow
Harbors the old illusion; soon the Wind
    Is on the dust delivered unto dream,
  And I am I again, and Thou art Thou,
    Who then were one in a diviner Scheme.

THE RETURN

The wholesome flowers of autumn blow
  And squirrels chatter as in joy,
  In woods I rambled when a boy,
Careless, and many years ago.

Old scents and sounds . . . . I find no change,
  Revisiting, a wanderer;
  The trees and roads are as they were,
Untouched, and I alone am strange—

Strange even to myself! And they,
  The lads who roamed the wood with me,
  Are changed from what they used to be,
And some are gone, and all are grey.

And now awhile I watch the bird
  That haunts the hollow past the hill,
  And dream I hear the echo still
Of voices I have never heard.

I well recall the path and pond—
  I who have journeyed since so far,
  Nor found by light of sun or star
That Land forevermore beyond.

MOLOCH

I said, "The dark has come too soon."
I gazed across the marshy waste
To where, by vapors half-effaced,
Sank the southwestern, slender moon.

The vapors brooded on the land,
Too big to sink, too foul to float,
Upcast like poison from the throat
Of one great chimney near at hand.

The factory about its base
Droned to the darkness, hour on hour—
Squat dungeons, huddled at its tow'r,
As fearful of the night's dim face.

MOLOCH

As fearful of the outraged night,
  It glowered with unblinking eyes
  On marshy waste, on tainted skies
Shamed by the desecrating light.

I said, "Within those roaring walls,
  What engines gleam, what toils await?
  There strength and power serve their fate,
And there a Titan's hammer falls.

"And surely there the fire reveals
  What giants at their service bend,—
  What thewed endurances attend
The sleepless shuttles and the wheels . . . . "

In meadow-dews an irised flame
  Stirred as the lucid morning broke,
  And from those portals, black with smoke,
A thousand weary children came!

THREE SONNETS ON SLEEP

I

Upon the skies of slumber dreams have flight,
And one from gentlest dreams may wake to weep.
The dark has moons to sway its utmost deep,
And stars that touch the sleeper from their height.
Ere long, tho mute and liberative Night
Thy soul and sorrow in her poppy steep,
Her flowers the sickle of the dawn shall reap,
In melancholy meadows of the light.

In vain are Lethe's dews upon the brow,
Except one find them on its farther shore;
And he alone has enviable rest
Who sought for peace through many tears, and now
Whose answered heart a rose is richer for,
In some old graveyard where the robins nest.

THREE SONNETS OF SLEEP

II

Life holds a different pact with every man,
  Tho to one sea her many streams descend.
  To some she stands a foe, to some a friend,
Devising each her benison or ban;
And one is saint, and one is courtesan;
  One labors, one is idle to the end.
  Of all her children none shall comprehend
Whether she strive in madness or with plan.

But Death has one condition for us all,
  And he that in the pyramid's deep core
Lies with the graven adamant for pall,
    In no profounder pit of silence sleeps
  Than he who has his grave by some low shore
    To which the thunder-bosomed ocean sweeps.

III

Death has the final answer to our cry,
And past our portals of unrest awaits
Responsive to our question of the Fates;
And he who would attain that deep reply
Must seal his ears to other sounds, and die.
What wonder, if before the midnight gates
The searcher of the riddle hesitates,
Uncertain what those ashen lips deny?

What if the hearer with the pleader cease,
And thus the timeless answer come unheard?
So he that sought for truth should find it peace,
In those long silences where none could hark
The mighty, indecipherable Word
That fell unfathomed on the eternal dark.

MAN

This is that brute which travailed, uncontent
To bask with fellow creatures in the sun,—
To filch from earth his sustenance, which done,
He could have ease in some cave's tenement.
Not wholly thus his urgent will was spent,
For peace within its borders had he none,
Foresensing on a journey unbegun
The airs of that inscrutable ascent.

With earth who bore him has he made his feud,
And dreamt of other stars, and sought him wings,
Decreed to an august ingratitude;
And for his tears the Verities vouchsafe
That he stand first among created things—
A seeker of abysses, and their waif!

ON A CITY STREET

And what the end of these, the toil and care
  That earn but access of to-morrow's pain?
  They labor that the morning rise again
On the same dregs of pleasure and despair;
That night but summon to the candle's flare
  The giddy moth, and slumber held in vain
  Refashioned hopes for the deluded brain,
And set fresh lures in life's betraying snare.

Or do such shadows of belief but seem?
  Could we see all the Plan, we might behold
    The dust flame into seraphim whose call
  Were Time's requital for the shames of old.
Alas! we cannot know! Yet must we dream
    Love is somehow the answer of it all.

ILLUSION

I am alone in this grey shadowland,—
  This world of phantoms I can never know,—
  This throng of seekers wandering to and fro,
Moved by a hidden god's unheard command;
And tho we knew the clasp of eye and hand,
  We watchers of the planet's passing show,
  Yet soon the "now" shall be the "long ago,"
And soon the prow shall grate on Lethe's strand.

Bring on the lights, the music and the wine,
  Ere the long silence give our feast to scorn!
    Let us forget all that we dread we are,
And let the mind's unknown horizon shine,
  As the heart graces with mirage of morn
    The night about its lost and lonely star.

ESSENTIAL NIGHT

Outreach and touch! But lo! thou hast not found!
Look forth! But what the tidings of thine eyes?
Taste! But His apple hath not made thee wise,
Nor hast thou heard His music out of sound.
As light by darkness is my spirit bound,
And on the soul are question and surmise:
The vision that I take not from the skies,
Shall that await in the awaiting ground?

Why brood the heavens in large indifference?
And what is all, and this my spirit what?
And what these apparitions of the sense
That pass through veils unto us blindfold ones,
In horror of deep darkness lifting not
For stars nor moon nor the concealing suns?

THE GLEANER

Of all we love or long for, what can last?
  The brief arbutus shines where shone the snow;
  The panic winds o'er dying flowers blow;
Far in the quiet woodland dies the blast.
Soft on the forehead of the hill are cast
  The fleeting splendors of the afterglow;
  Where sang the brook the desert lichens grow.
Who runs, shall find the feet of Change are fast.

Yet in the solitude of all that died
  A Shadow roams the somber fields, long known,
    Where ashen gardens house the pilgrim sands,
And mournful stars behold at eventide
  How wanders peaceless Memory alone,
    Seeking in dust the vanished lips and hands.

CALIFORNIA

What little child but knows
Its mother's face the fairest? Is there one?
Tho long ago the rose
Have faded from her cheek, for labor done,
Vigils, and anxious tears,
Her child sees not the loss, nor counts her years.
So has each land her brood
That cherish her in fond solicitude,
And sing her beauty to the stranger's ears.

O mother of our hearts!
O California, still fair and young!
The beautiful departs,
And all too soon the sweetest song is sung.

Thou hast not sorrowed yet;
Seldom for grief thy laughing face is wet.
May tears be very far,
For on thy forehead is a happy star,
A light of joy that elder lands regret.

Though gracious youth be thine
And virginal reluctancies of heart,
Yet in thy gardens shine
The marbles and the poppy-flame of Art;
And ah! thy maiden blood!
But ecstasies are hidden in its flood—
Red lips that sing unseen
The secret fires to be thine own, O Queen!
And all the scarlet buried in the bud.

Let not thine envy rise
For eastern kingdoms mournful with romance:
Below thy tranquil skies,
To lutes as sweet maidens as fair shall dance.

Bower and bird and tune
Await the lovers and their mystic moon.
O raptures yet to be!
O sweet adventure that the years shall see,
Ambered in legend's everlasting June!

Thy laughing loveliness
Compels to vision, and our fancies roam,
Led by a fragrant tress,
To groves as sweet and fields of meadow-foam,
Or timeless thrones of snow,
Or azure inlets that the naiads know—
By some enchantment drawn
Whose light is not in the refusing dawn,
Whose voice is not where any rivers flow.

What is it we have lost,
And in thine evening shadow fain would find?
Pearls of a deep uncrossed?
Tidings entrusted only to the wind?

CALIFORNIA

Between thy snows and main,
Somewhere thou hast the answer to our pain—
A secret to impart
Ere the last bird hide music in her heart,
Or star and sunset meet beyond the rain.

Dream as we will, thy face
Is fairer than the vision that we found.
The wild, reluctant grace
That fancy gives a dryad newly crowned
Is portion of thy lure;
So lives a forest flower that dares endure
In some unknown recess
Where only shadows touch its loveliness,
And new-born waters chant to winds as pure.

O beautiful and glad!
The gifts in thy bestowal seem too fair;
If any heart be sad,
Thou waitest with the balsam for its care;

And if one question thee
Thy love shall speak, tho low the answer be
As dip of distant oar,
Or conchs blown faintly on a haunted shore—
Heard when the fog's white dusk is on the sea.

But dream and memory meet,
Wistful to know thy future way through Time.
We see thy fearless feet,
But not the hostile mountains thou shalt climb.
Untried thy heart that must
Be battle-tested ere the cannon rust;
And peace is yet thy dow'r,
O thou regardless of the patient Pow'r
Within whose hour-glass falls the nations' dust!

So, crown thy careless head,
And bid the sun make roses for thy breast!
Be thine eyes richly fed
And thy swift limbs too passionate to rest!

CALIFORNIA

Far eastward lies the night,
And thou art beautiful in all men's sight,
And all men laud thy ways,
Who givest to the mercenary days
A time and place for laughter and delight.

POEMS ON THE PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION

Voices are crying from the dust of Tyre,
From Karnak and the stones of Babylon—
We raised our pillars upon Self-Desire,
And perished from the large gaze of the sun.

EDWIN MARKHAM

ODE ON THE OPENING OF THE PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION

I

Be ye lift up, O gates of sea and land,
Before the host that comes,
Not, as of old, with roar of hurrying drums,
And blaze of steel, and voice of war's command!
Legions of peace are at thy borders now,
O California, and ranks whose eyes
Behold the deathless star upon thy brow
And know it leads to love.

Wherefore, give thou thy banner to the skies,
And let the clarions of thy conquest sound!
For thine is holy ground,
And from thy heavens above
Falls tenderly a rain of life, not death.
Thy sons have found
Again the rivers of that Paradise
And valleys where the fig and olive grow,
Wherefrom, one saith,
Man journeyed forth in tears, and long ago.

Be ye lift up, O gates of many halls,
That house, sublime,
The trophies and the nobler spoils of Time!
From where the Orient in friendship calls
Across her ocean-roads,—
From Africa's abodes,—
From seas whose purple bore the keels of Tyre,—
From islands west and north,—

THE PANAMA-PACIFIC EXPOSITION

From lands that see the white Andean walls,—
From those frontiers of thunder and of fire
That compass Europe now, hath man sent forth
The fruitage of his labor and his art.
Behold the greatness of his mind and heart
Who so can strive
And, tho the earthquake rive,
And War, with mailed hands at the race's throat,
Confirm the terrors that the prophets wrote
And all the stars have seen since Christ was born,
Can so bear witness to the soul within!
Yea! from Earth's mire of ignorance and sin
He marches with the morn,
And lays a new commandment on the sea,
Bidding it set the continents apart,
And of the trackless heavens is he free.
Yet those are but the lesser of his dreams,
When the white vision of the Future gleams,
And Music in his heart

Makes for a while the seraph he shall be;
For he would sway the sun's effulgent beams,
Vassal to that diviner sun, his brain,
  And set afar the years of Death,
    And with exultant breath
Cry victory on matter and on pain.
Lo! in what sorrow and mysterious mirth
Do we draw up against the Night our plan!
O toil of ants, beholding the great Earth!
O Titans' work, seeing how small is man!

II

Audacious age of the affirming word,
The useful doubt, the kindly sceptic gaze,
  Greeting! for man too long has heard
The moans of war, too long beheld the blaze
    Of cities on the skies
    Or mirrored in the flood,
And Horror brooding with her moonlike eyes

O'er nations at debaucheries of blood.
Let now the veil be drawn
That hides from man thine inner loveliness,
While the young eagles of thy sciences
Soar from their pinnacles against the dawn!
For thou hast shown him how the years transmute
The dim surmisings of the larval brute,
And hast in mercy laid
A burden on his weakness and his wings—
This moth for whom the ranging stars were made,
This groping lord of things,
Come forth from night unknown to ends unseen,
With hint of what the constellations mean.

O man and his Adventure! From the slime
Of old abysses and the hateful hiss
Of dragons, hath he journeyed forth to this,
Whose soul strikes light through Time.
What seed of what Design was in that soul

And what its destined goal,
That he, once halt and blind,
Hath won the peaks above the brutish years,
And in the astounding crucibles of mind
Seeketh the mighty answer to his tears?
O patient toiler in the silent Night!
Thy triumphs stand about us, balm and book,
Complexities of steel and engines bright,
The wings that serve our speed,
And, whatso way one look,
A myriad of shapes of human joy or need.
Here, too, the wonders of thy harvest shine,
The corn, the fruit, the wine—
The bounties great and fair
That thou, with loving care,
Hast fostered on a thousand hills and plains,
Trapping the distant rains,
And on the wilderness
Leading new rills to compensate and bless.

And here the silent seraphim of Art
Gaze out august above the human streams.
O beauty making lonelier the heart,
And sending forth the soul on deathless dreams!

III

So have we striven and wrought, that one time were
The bestial folk of midden and of cave
And now with lens and alchemy do test
The wandering heavens and Earth their wanderer.
With toil of tireless hands,
How high we build, this side the awaiting grave,
Scorning awhile its answer and its rest!
Yet, can it be we build upon the sands?
Man's eye turns manward from the mote and star,
And sees past greatness given to the tomb,
Nor knows what destined doom
Waits, vigilant, where the Destructions are.
Lo! as a mist that melts before the day

The columns and the courts have passed away.
Advancing Time, look back
To where in mist the broken pillars fade,
The ghostly milestones of thy barren track!
Who took the blade have perished by the blade,
For thine the years when the old empires passed,
With wail of trumpets from a gulf of blood,
The annihilating flood
Wherein the countenance of Doom was glassed.
So rose they, realm by realm,
Whose walls the legioned grasses overwhelm.
So sank they, one by one,
Who had gone forth in mail beneath the sun,
And, in their greed or lust,
Dragged lesser nations at the chariot wheels.
And now the old betrayal of the dust
Hath found them, striking from the anointed brow
The crown, and sinking all the intrepid keels.
The desert holds the oppressor and oppressed;

THE PANAMA-PACIFIC EXPOSITION

The winds alone are great in Carthage now;
The lizard and the lichen have the rest. . . .

What flaw in their foundations, and what ill
    Upon their armored lords,
    That ever down the years
The Worm that feeds on nations had its fill?
Not all the sentried ramparts and the spears,
Nor yet the trident and the walling swords
        Could stem its might.
The thousand high-built Babylons of light
May mock the stars no longer, nor their kings
Be more than ashes where the desert finds
Echoes of doom and conquest on its winds,
    But their names nevermore.
What flaw in their foundations, and what ill
    Upon the hearts they bore,
That now the jackal litters on the hill
    That once was Pharaoh's throne?

The question holds one answer and but one,
Between the rising and the setting sun:
They are the realms that built on self alone!

And we till now have built as even they!
And dimly and in few the vision stands
Of that new City built not on the sands;
And distant still the sunlight of that Day.
For walked the Babylonian again
Within our streets, once more should he behold
    The immeasurable Care,
That ancient curse of poverty and gold,—
The selfsame twins of luxury and pain,—
The olden madness of division where
The poor beg work, and beg for it in vain,
And children slave, and stones are given for bread,
While Mammon lolls on cushions of his fat,
Whose glut not all the toil of men can sate.
    Amid the tumult and the hate,

None hears the distant menace of the tread
Of One whose hands hold darkness and the dust,—
    Whose reign is soon or late,—
Whose hunger with the monarch's pomp is fed,—
Who giveth kingdoms to the moth and rust,
Till o'er the glory, fleeting as a breath,
"Lo! I am come!" the Desolation saith.

IV

Behold! except Love build the House of Man
In vain we labor and in vain we guard!
    In vain shall Learning scan
That heaven where the hostile suns contend
Or inward skies of atoms many-starred,
If love of man for man be not the end.
    And idly Reason strives,
    If nevermore we find
The graver glory that escapes our lives.
Oh! for that hour when all see clear at last,

Who now go blind,
The horror and the brutehood of the Past!
Oh! for some high-noon of the spirit, when
The Radiance be given unto men
That was the star of heroes and the Grail
For which the fearless saints of science died!
Oh! for the Light to see in every face
A mother's love, or father's tender care,
Or brother's faithfulness, or sister's grace!
What night of self and pride
Is on us, that we see not in each one
The lover long-denied,—
The dearest to us each beneath the sun?
The selfsame need is there
For hope and trust, for love and happiness;
But still amid the press,
Blinded, we pass beside
The stranger, and he fares a stranger still,
Nor see we there the brother or the sire;

And poor men hunger on the wasteful street,
And children toil and tire,
And girls go downward to the Social Ill,
And life's design of madness lies complete,
That Greed and Luxury may have their fill!
O dark and cruel State,
Whose towers are altars unto self alone,—
Whose streets with tears are wet,
And half thy councils given unto hate!
Shall Time not hurl thy temples stone from stone,
And o'er the ruin set
A fairer city than the years have known?
Out of thy darkness do we find us dreams,
And on the future gleams
The vision of thy ramparts built anew.
Mammon and War sit now a double throne,
Yet what we dream, a wiser Age shall do.

V

Be ye lift up, O everlasting gates
Of that far City men shall build for Man!
O fairer Day that waits,
The splendor of whose dawn we shall not see,
When selfish bonds of family and clan
Melt in the higher love that yet shall be!
O State without a master or a slave,
Whose law of light we crave
Ere morning widen on a world set free!
Alas! how distant are,
To watchers of the Past,
Thy palms of peace, thy mercy and thy truth!
Yet Faith's great eyes look upward to her star,
Strong in immortal youth:
We know the reign of Night shall end at last,
And all the ancient evil lie undone.
O armies of the sun,
Your war is on the darkness and its tears!

THE PANAMA-PACIFIC EXPOSITION

Across the gulf of years
We hear your song and see your banners shine.
Know that we too would share your toils divine,
On self and madness hastening their end.
Lo! from our Age we send
A music brief and broken and august
To mingle with your own,—
A strain from silence flown,
Saying we too have hungered to the sky,
And built from many tears and humble dust
A Dream that shall not altogether die—
The vision of that day
When human strength shall serve the common good,
And man, forever loyal to the race,
Find, far beyond our seasons of dismay,
The guerdon of its grace:
One hope, one home, one song, one brotherhood,
And in each face the best-beloved's face.

THE BUILDERS

The year grows old, but Progress has no age:
  Her flags go forward to increasing light;
  Behind her lies the night;
It is a ceaseless war her soldiers wage,
And on her great and ever-widening sky,
"Onward!" is still the truceless battle cry.

The future is our kingdom, and, altho
  Our hands unbuild the city they have built,
  Yet here no blood is spilt
Nor swords uplifted for a nation's woe.
And, tho the columns and the temples pass,
Let none regret; let no man cry "Alas!"

We do but cross a threshold into day.
  Beauty we leave behind,
  A deeper beauty on our path to find
And higher glories to illume the way.

The door we close behind us is the Past:
Our sons shall find a fairer door at last.

A world reborn awaits us. Years to come
  Shall know its grace and good,
  When wars shall end in endless brotherhood,
And birds shall build in cannon long since dumb.
Men shall have peace, though then no man may know
Who built this sunset city long ago.

Wherefore, be glad! Sublimer walls shall rise,
  Which these do but foretell.
  Be glad, indeed! For we have builded well
And set a star upon our western skies
Whose fire shall greaten on a land made free,
Till all that land be bright from sea to sea!

THE EVANESCENT CITY

Great on the west, ere darkness crush her domes,
  Wine-red the city of the sunset lies.
Below her courts the mournful ocean foams;
  Above, no foam of cloud is on the skies.

Awhile I stand, a dreamer by the deep,
  And watch the winds of evening sap her walls,
Till ashen armies to the ramparts sweep
  And seas of shadow storm the gleaming halls.

So dies that far magnificence of light,
  A conquered splendor on a crumbling pyre,
'Mid fall of crimson temples from their height
  And ruined altars yielding up their fire.

So fades that city, one with all that finds
  The nameless road that Beauty takes at last—
One with her dust upon the twilight winds
  And all her music mingling with the Past.

"Farewell!" I whisper low—then thrill to see,
  Unseen till now, eternal and afar,
Soul of dead day and pledge of peace to be,
  The tranquil silver of the evening star.

And even thus our city of a year
  Must pass like those the shafted sunsets build,
Fleeting as all fair things and, fleeting, dear—
  A rainbow fallen and an anthem stilled.

A rainbow fallen—but within the soul
Its deep, indubitable iris burns;
And anthem stilled—yet for its ghostly goal
The incommunicable music yearns.

Only for Beauty's passing shall we trace
The heavenly pathway that her feet have trod;
Only at her departure seek her face—
We that shall find it not this side of God.

PERSONAL POEMS

FRANK UNGER

Thou sleepest well! On all our troubled earth,
Weary of war, what gentler heart could cease?
O Savior! at the season of Thy birth
Thou hast remembered that Thy gift is peace!

A voice is mute that had no word of hate,
And one gone forth who shall not come again—
A comrade true, a friend compassionate;
Tender and brave, a soul without a stain.

Jesus, whose word it was that save as we
Become as little children, meek and mild,
We shall not enter, turn Thy face and see:
One waiteth at the door, a little child!

TO XAVIER MARTINEZ, PAINTER

Poet, whose song leaves nothing more to say
  Except the mystery beyond all song,
  To thee that light and sight of Art belong
Which, searching Nature with a crystal ray,
Reveal in iris the rejected clay.
  Visions august have made thy heart too strong
  To need the fleeting plaudits of the throng,
And thou hast seen the choral stars by day.

Thy touch can turn all things to loveliness—
  A solemn beauty, delicate and strange,
A secret that we love too well to guess.
    The goddess lingers long above thy dreams,
  Hearing beyond this world of death and change,
    The lyres that glimmer by immortal streams.

THE LIGHT-GIVER

"Let there be light!" said One.
And from the ancient gulf of darkness strode,
Harnessed and swift for their immortal road,
The horses of the sun.

And you are child of Him,
Great Edison, for whose creative hands
The night is less on all the seas and lands,
And day itself less dim.

At evening from this hill
Gaze forth, and see the stars that you have lit—
The human constellations that transmit
The message of man's will.

Not Babylon nor Tyre
Might mock the lights of Heaven with lamps like these,
Above whose radiance the Pleiades
Float with unheeded fire.

Over the earth's vast verge
On London now a double darkness lies;
But here below unapprehended skies
What tides of splendor surge!

Your war is on the night:
Shadow by shadow we escape its reign,
As from the holy seed within your brain
The world is sown with light.

Let not your battle cease!
Another Night remains, nor till its sway
Ends in the morning of a vaster Day
Shall men have perfect peace.

Star after new-born star
Dispels that gloom of ignorance and crime;
Their glory greatens on the brows of Time;
The dawn is not so far.

The huge frontiers of night
Dissolve around a liberated land—
Pierced by the deathless ray within your hand,
O Captain of the Light!

TO MARGARET ANGLIN

IN THE GREEK TRAGEDIES

She has heard mighty music from the Past,
  And deathless trumpets from oblivion,
  And she has seen the blood of heroes run
To stain the morning of a day forecast.
How high, O Art, the ministry thou hast!
  Behold! the magic of thy chosen one
  Has called their shades from Lethe to the sun,
And ghosts of gods from heavens that could not last.

Black on the arras of the years that were,
What shadows of immortal armies stir!
  The stars conspire, and groping by their light,
    Man seeks for joy and peace, nor knows what loom,
  Tireless by dusk or noon or deep of night,
    Runs scarlet with the fabric of his doom.

ON THE GREAT WAR

THE SONG OF THE VALKYRS

Horizons of the world, what hide ye from our sight?
What Fates sing now from darkness their ancient
battle-song?
Are those the armored Valkyrs men hear across the
night?
What god hath set the trumpet to lips austere and
strong?

The deeps and heights are shaken. The walls of the
Dark
Tremble with all their stars, and all stars reel.
Shadows from outer night draw closer now to hark
The echo of what thunders, the music of whose
steel?

Whose is the war? Who first hath drawn the sword?
"A king!" cry the Valkyrs, "whose rule is on the race!
Woe to the many, who hold one man their lord!
For one hath loosed the tempest, and hid the heavens' face!

"War's gate is down, and Thor! Thor is forth!
He hath thrown off old harness, to forge him weapons new.
The gaunt guns toll, sounding from south to north,
To call young men to doom, till young men are few.

"The old men shall call, and the young men shall hear,
Hear and set out, who never shall come back—
They that might have sown in the spring of the year,
They that now shall reap the bitter grain and black.

"The tides of doom's sea are mounted unto flood;
The long dykes are down, sundered at one man's breath.
All the youth of Europe shall render of their blood.
All the youth of Europe shall sit at dice with Death.

"Ravens, appear! and come, ye birds of prey
From high and lonely places, for now is food for all.
Wolves of the night, be early on your way!
The fold is left open; they guard another wall.

"Thor! Thor is forth! Hark to his ocean-voice!
The blood of the world makes scarlet his hands.
Thor is forth upon the dark! Sisters, rejoice!
A king hath loosed the god whose sword is on the lands!"

THE DREAM OF WILHELM II

He, a colossus towering toward the spheres,
With tyrant shadow casting triple night
On Europe, saw with dominating sight
The great world-caldron seethe with futile tears,
And heard as with a god's commending ears
The tread of armies whose resistless might
Should stay mankind's advancement to the light,
But throne his dynasty a thousand years.

Then rose he from the conquered globe on wings
Such as in vision serve the will of kings,
Till gazing from the violated skies
He saw, below his battles' smoky bars,
With flaming France and Russia for its eyes,
Earth like a skull that glared upon the stars.

EARTH'S ANTHEM

The mighty tempest of the world-war breaks—
  That Armageddon that our sires foretold.
  This is the lash the lords of Europe hold
To scourge their peoples, and the battle takes
Frontiers of flame and thunder, and Earth makes
  A melancholy music, bleakly rolled
  On fateful heavens menacing and cold,
Where Shadows gather and the Red Star shakes.

The vulture's beak is whetted for the dove.
  In vain we build our temples, and in vain
We tend the lamps of Science and of Love,
    When on the flame and consecrated oil
  War, in a vast and headlong hurricane,
    Launches the Night in which no man shall toil.

TO GERMANY

I

Beat back thy forfeit plow-shares into swords:
  It is not yet, the far, seraphic dream
  Of peace made beautiful and love supreme.
Now let the strong, unweariable chords
Of battle shake to thunder, and the hordes
  Advance, where now the famished vultures scream.
  The standards gather and the trumpets gleam;
Down the long hill-side stare the mounted lords.

Now far beyond the tumult and the hate
The white-clad nurses and the surgeons wait
  The backward currents of tormented life,
    When on the waiting silences shall come
    The screams of men, and, ere those lips are dumb,
  The searching probe, the ligature and knife.

II

Was it for such, the brutehood and the pain,
  Civilization gave her holy fire
  Unto thy wardship, and the snowy spire
Of her august and most exalted fane?
Are these the harvests of her ancient rain
  Men reap at evening in the scarlet mire,
  Or where the mountain smokes, a dreadful pyre,
Or where the warship drags a bloody stain?

Are these thy votive lilies and their dews,
  That now the outraged stars look down to see?
    Behold them, where the cold, prophetic damps
Congeal on youthful brows so soon to lose
  Their dream of sacrifice to thee—to thee,
    Harlot to Murder in a thousand camps!

III

Was it for this that loving men and true
  Have labored in the darkness and the light
  To rear the solemn temple of the Right,
On Reason's deep foundations, bared anew
Long after the Caesarian eagles flew
  And Rome's last thunder died upon the Night?
  Cuirassed, the cannon menace from the height;
Armored, the new-born eagles take the blue.

Wait not thy lords the avenging, certain knell—
  One with the captains and abhorrent fames
The echoes of whose conquests died in Hell?—
    They that have loosened the ensanguined flood,
  And whose malign and execrable names
    The Seraph of the Record writes in blood.

IV

From gravid trench and sullen parapet,
  Profane the wounded lands with mine or shell!
  Turn thou upon the world thy cannons' Hell,
Till many million women's eyes are wet!
Ravage and slay! Pile up the eternal debt!
  But when the fanes of France and Belgium fell
  Another ruin was on earth as well,
And ashes that the race shall not forget.

Not by the devastation of the guns,
  Nor tempest-shock, nor steel's subverting edge,
Nor yet the slow erasure of the suns
    The downfall came, betrayer of thy trust!
  But at the dissolution of a pledge
    The temple of thine honor sank to dust.

V

Make not thy prayer to Heaven, lest perchance,
O troubler of the world, the heavens hear!
But trust in Uhlan and in cannoneer,
And, ere the Russian hough thee, set thy lance
Against the dear and blameless breast of France!
Put on thy mail tremendous and austere,
And let the squadrons of thy wrath appear,
And bid the standards and the guns advance!

Those as an evil mist shall pass away,
As once the Assyrian before the Lord:
Thou standest between mortals and the day,
Ere God, grown weary of thine armored reign,
Lift from the world the shadow of thy sword
And bid the stars of morning sing again.

BETRAYAL

I

Strange, that the race relinquish to the hands,
  Mailed and relentless, of the haughty few
  Its destinies! The pomps Assyria knew
Moan to the twilight of the bitter sands
With lips of stone, and in the desert stands
  No record of the millions that she slew.
  There gleams no throne in Time's august review
But sent a sword upon the patient lands.

On Europe now, as once on Babylon,
The vulture bands go forth beneath the sun,
  And ravens hover at the flanks of war
    With clamor echoless and desolate,
    As tho each bird cried hoarsely to its mate,
  "The kings are at their bloody work once more!"

II

Why will ye suffer it, and give to kings
  The reins of government, O brothers blind?
  Upon their roads of empire ye shall find
Despair and agony and shattered things.
Their suns conspire; the throne's deep shadow
    swings
  Its midnight on the race's heart and mind;
  Your homes they open to the rain and wind,
Your portals to the bat's familiar wings.

Their feet take hold on Hell, and on their path
  Lie Beauty violate and Love profaned;
    Their armies trample and their chariots ride
On harvests and the hearth-stone, and your wrath
  Wakes not, nor hath your purblind strength
    arraigned
    Their idiot "honor" and insensate pride!

BELGIUM, AUGUST, 1914

O Earth! O star of sorrow! at thy breast
  What vampires have had sustenance of thee!
  From thy dark womb what furies have gone free
And in thy shadowy lap what dragons nest!
O beautiful as thou art all unblest!
  From thee so fair shall births so monstrous be,
  And in thy smile must man forever see
A hidden hatred, endless and suppressed?

How harmless are thy serpents, matched with man!
  How gentle are the wars of fen or wave,
Beside this other that thy children plan!
    Across the dykes of mercy sweeps the flood;
  Butcher and beast, the hordes of Odin rave,
    Whom War hath blinded with the dust of blood!

ENGLAND, AUGUST, 1914

Southward again on ancient roads of war,
  Beyond the Narrow Seas thy legions flow,
  Where wait the battle-fields of long-ago,
Ramparts thy lion-flag hath known before,
And cities where they crowned thee conqueror.
  Depart the youthful ranks that cannot know
  As yet the power and malice of the foe,
But know what vow those perjured lips forswore.

Thy war is for the sanctity of pledge—
  Whether the word of man to man endure,
    Or that his bond be as a rope of sand.
Forth! till the world be cleansed of sacrilege,
  And those antique foundations rest secure
    On which the pillars of the Temple stand!

TO THE WAR-LORDS

I

Be yours the doom Isaiah's voice foretold,
  Lifted on Babylon, O ye whose hands
  Cast the sword's shadow upon weaker lands,
And for whose pride a million hearths grow cold!
Ye reap but with the cannon, and do hold
  Your plowing to the murder-god's commands;
  And at your altars Desolation stands,
And in your hearts is conquest, as of old.

The legions perish and the warships drown;
  The fish and vulture batten on the slain;
And it is ye whose word hath shaken down
  The dykes that hold the chartless sea of pain.
Your prayers deceive not men, nor shall a crown
  Hide on the brow the murder-mark of Cain.

II

Now glut yourselves with conflict, nor refrain,
But let your famished provinces be fed
From bursting granaries of steel and lead!
Decree the sowing of that deadly grain
Where the great war-horse, maddened with his pain,
Stamps on the mangled living and the dead,
And from the entreated heavens overhead
Falls from a brother's hand a fiery rain.

Lift not your voices to the gentle Christ:
Your god is of the shambles! Let the moan
Of nations be your psalter, and their youth
To Moloch and to Bel be sacrificed!
A world to which ye proffered lies alone
Learns now from Death the horror of your truth.

III

How have you fed your people upon lies,
And cried "Peace! peace!" and knew it would
not be!
For now the iron dragons take the sea,
And in the new-found fortress of the skies,
Alert and fierce a deadly eagle flies.
Ten thousand cannon echo your decree,
To whose profound refrain ye bend the knee
And lift into the Lord of Love your eyes.

This is Hell's work: why raise your hands to Him,
And those hands mailed, and holding up the
sword?
There stands another altar, stained with red,
At whose basalt the infernal seraphim
Uplift to Satan, your conspirant lord,
The blood of nations, at your mandate shed.

THE WAR-GOD

Behold the pandar of Oblivion—
  This idiot monster, holding hate his law!
  It is for him that Life must stand in awe,
For him that Art hath cringed and Science done
Whoredom among the tribes, refusing none.
  In his red day our scruples are as straw:
  The nations gather at his word, and draw
His chariot, refulgent as the sun.

The stars of many masterdoms have set,
  But that star sets not ever, and the light
    That fell on Troy is cast on Europe now;
And as of old the mothers' eyes are wet,
  And the brute god, girded with steel and night,
    Above Time's charnel scowls with armored
      brow.

"AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING"

The royal word goes forth, and armies do
  The work of devils. Agony and waste
  Are on the world, and the grim legions haste
On the old war-roads that the Caesars knew.
Still gleams the dreadful stain of Waterloo,
  On Time's accusing record unerased;
  Gone are the ramparts that the Romans faced,
But these the heavens where their eagles flew.

Below the bleak and slowly shifting stars,
  Man turns him in his madness, to reveal
    His ancient folly and his ancient crime,
And on the tragic breast austere with scars
  Re-girds the mail, and draws the hilted steel,
    Cold from the twilight battlefields of Time.

THE HOUSE OF WAR

Whose heart is fed on vision, and whose mind
  With portent of a Golden Age to be?
  Let him look forth on Europe and the sea,
As eagles of destruction ride the wind;
But higher must his soul ascend to find
  What star of peace the future may decree:
  Her ray is deep in night's infinity,
And men deny her, and the heavens are blind.

Seek not her pathway where the airship flies
And Death hath station on the nearer skies,
  Smiling on empires that his feet have trod,
    Where shone the sword and now the cannon
      shines,
    As the slow Fates, from gulfs without a God,
  Swing up the sun of murder on the Signs.

"AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING"

The royal word goes forth, and armies do
  The work of devils. Agony and waste
  Are on the world, and the grim legions haste
On the old war-roads that the Caesars knew.
Still gleams the dreadful stain of Waterloo,
  On Time's accusing record unerased;
  Gone are the ramparts that the Romans faced,
But these the heavens where their eagles flew.

Below the bleak and slowly shifting stars,
  Man turns him in his madness, to reveal
    His ancient folly and his ancient crime,
And on the tragic breast austere with scars
  Re-girds the mail, and draws the hilted steel,
    Cold from the twilight battlefields of Time.

TO BELGIUM

As Rome beat down the kingdoms, one by one,
  With sword invincible, until her sway
  Held from the rise to set of Europe's day,
So to his war-adventure leapt the Hun,
And as the Roman wrought, so had he done,
  Were not thy sons as lions on his way.
  Granite he found thee, who had thought thee clay,
O nation clothed as with the noonday sun!

O barrier to the tempest! Faithful wall
  That held the armored avalanche a space!
    O little dyke against so great a flood!
Thou sentry, whom no midnight could appall!
  Thou Christ of nations, giving to the race
    That respite purchased with thy holy blood!

THE TWO PRAYERS

"O Christ of peace, grant that he live!" she cried—
The widow-mother kneeling ere the day.
"Oh! give thine angels charge upon his way,
Mine only son, my beautiful, my pride!
And grant him life, who for our sake hast died!"
So through the lonely hours she knelt to pray,
Where the poor candle cast its friendly ray
And overhead the dark lay dumb and wide.

Not so the midnight stood with him for whom
Her voice arose: there shrank the harried gloom
From searchlights and the cannon's flaming breath,
As he, slow writhing in the crimson slime
Through the mad torment of delaying time,
Prayed with insatiable lips for death.

AFTERMATH

Slowly among the wounded and the slain
  The gleaners take the harvest of the kings,
  But harvest-song no joyous maiden sings,
And crimson fingers lift a crimson grain.
Where darkness and the powers of darkness reign,
  They bend above unutterable things,
  As far away the restless searchlight swings
Its ghastly ray along the burdened plain.

Well seems it that they wear a cross of red,
  But better seems it that this earth should bear
    That blazon in the concourse of the stars,
(Ere the Night conquer and the sun fall dead)
  And 'mid dark Signs and warring heavens glare,
    Disastrous, with the bloody light of Mars.

THE WAR-MACHINE

Behold the monster that their hands have made!
  Behold the mindless god of steel and lead
  To whom the unhappy sons of man are fed!
His priests in gold and scarlet stand arrayed;
His altar reeks; the lamp within the shade
  Glows with a quenchless and malignant red.
  O poisoned wine and pestilential bread!
O faith discomfited and hope betrayed!

His music is a weeping in the dark,
  And hiss of knotted serpents, and the moan
  Of men that bleed upon his altar-stone,
    Where the blind seraphim of Pain and Death
Stand in the shadow right and left, nor mark
    The incense coiling like a dragon's breath.

BOMBARDMENT

The womb of steel, with thunder and a moan,
  Released its burden, and the screaming shell
  Swung up in flame above the heavens' Hell.
Remote, on sounding skies till then unknown,
Where once the vulture circled, high and lone,
  Or Alpine eagles had their citadel,
  That iron offspring took the dark, then fell
As falls, unheralded, the meteor-stone.

In that domain of majesty and night
There stood no haven for its evil flight:
  Its goal was horror, and the goal afar.
    Ere long, where huddling babes and women
      wept,
    And wounded men were couched, and no man
      slept,
  Deep in the midnight city sank that star.

GERMANY

As he who shod the horses of the sun,
  She made her desecrated forges peal
  To monstrous births of cannon and of keel,
Where fires deliver and the hammers stun;
And when the daylight and the toil were done,
  Upon the breast of Peace she set her heel,
  Loosing the headlong avalanche of steel,
With lance on lance and gun on cruel gun.

As Sampson in his blindness hath she snapt
  The pillars of the temple of the light,
    Drawn down in ruin upon Europe's head.
To heavens in the smoke of conquest wrapt
  There cry unheeded voices in the night,
    From new-made ramparts builded of the dead.

THE DEATH-CHORDS

What antiphon is this, with Earth to Hell
  Rendering moan for moan? Alas the cries
  That from red mouths of many wounds arise
Above the bass of cannon and the knell
Of tolling mortal and infernal shell!
  Far upon Europe's overshadowed skies
  The deep vibration of that anthem dies,
When falls the night with Death for sentinel.

This is the music of thy traitor kings,
  O world betrayed, and this the cruel song
    Thou singest in the heavens of love and light!
Fold, fold across the lands thy mighty wings
  Of dawn and sunset: thou hast sung too long!
    Draw round thy breast the everlasting Night!

THE FEAST

Never, O Death, was such a wine as this
  Given thine everlasting thirst to drain,—
  Never a vintage of so royal stain,
Crushed from the youth of Europe for thy bliss.
At these thine orgies Hate and Madness kiss,
  And Horror crowns the frantic brows of Pain;
  Garlands of serpents are thy flowery chain
And, for thy music, their infernal hiss.

Drink deep: such banquet shall not be again.
  Drink till the lees are cloudy in the cup,
    And in thy veins a scarlet venom sings!
Then, drunken with the doom of myriad men,
  Kneel, and at ruined altars offer up
    Thy deep thanksgiving to the power of kings!

WAR'S MUSIC

As harp-strings now the swept horizons roar.
  The bleak, tremendous music of the guns
  Seems as the challenge of contending suns
When past Orion's sword the heavens war.
The sound is of a sea whose waves outpour
  Destruction, and whose wind of ruin runs
  With thunder, where—a voice whose onset stuns—
Groans a red surf upon a crimson shore.

Are these the tidings of the race's doom
  The throats of cannon utter to the world?
    The mortar tolls like Death's prophetic bell,
And tongues of terror cry across the gloom,
  Where the great shells descend like chariots hurled
    From midnight, on some battlefield of Hell.

THE AEROPLANE

Afar and high, on wings that feared no wind,
  The intrepid dragon of espial flew,
  Unseen at last within the housing blue,
And o'er dim provinces at last inclined,
Stared from the pinnacles of noon to find
  The plan and purpose of the war's review—
  What counsels launched, what jeopardies withdrew.
The groping armies, ominous and blind.

Then homed the watcher to its armored nest,
  Down the cold dome immense and desolate,
    Where clouds beleaguer and the sunlight chills—
Death's herald, bearing to the anxious west
  The secret of the captains, and the fate
    Of legions hidden in the deadly hills.

BEFORE DAWN

"Tell us, O Watchman, tell us of the Night!
What tidings from the world's high parapet?"
"There is no pausing nor cessation yet
Where the lords gather and the legions fight.
Mars in his House of Blood hath sovran light
Above the ashes of a Day long set,
And with his scarlet dew the land is wet,
And the red stars gaze with despotic sight."

So rang the message that they bent to hark,
As from his height the western Sentinel
Beheld the Signs malignant in their place,
And heard beyond the horizon of the dark
The solemn sound of cannon, as tho Hell
Tolled forth the doom and burial of the race.

THE TURK

Behold him! the abominable! the beast!
The butcher of the race, malignly red
With blood of helpless ones from heel to head!
Behold this infamy by Fate released
On gentler nations given as a feast
Where vultures batten after he has fed,
And trampled bosoms of the tortured dead
Pave his dominion of the ravished East.

Over the rondure of the world a cry
Goes forth against him, as Armenia's breast
Implores a hundredth time for God to save—
A bleak and dreadful voice upon the sky
To North and South, and in the avenging West
An echo of the moan that Belgium gave.

THE NEW KINGS

Not gold, but steel, O Bethlehem! they bring—
  Not myrrh, but powder; nor may shepherds find
  Wafture of frankincense upon the wind:
The breath of cannon has a sharper sting!
Far in the south awakes a muttering
    That tells a worship of a grimmer kind,
  And soon an older god shall be enshrined
Where once the Magi found an infant King.

What the repulsed Crusader could not hold,
  Take thou, O Russia! in a nobler cause!
And on the pathway of the kings of old
    Advance, with guns that sound the Moslem knell
  And northern steel and ranks that never pause,
    Led to Christ's manger by the Star of Hell!

TO FRANCE

O daughter of the morning! on thy brow
  Immortal be the lilies thou hast won!
  Eternal be thy station in the sun,
That shines not on a splendor such as thou!
A strength is thine beyond the armored prow,
  And past dominion of the lance and gun,
  Tho now thou stand, as battle-thunders stun,
Heroic, on the fields that cannon plow.

Triumph be thine, O beautiful and dear!
  Whose cause is one with Freedom and her name.
    The armies of the night devise thee wrong,
But on thy helm the star of Truth is clear,
  And Truth shall conquer, tho thy cities flame,
    And morning break, tho now the night is
      strong!

THE NIGHT OF MAN

Europe, how have kings dealt with thee, and sown
  Thine every acre from a human breast!
  Red was the seed and red the harrow pressed
To bitter fields whose harvest was a moan;
And the long years pass on to the unknown,
  And cannon utter now thy lords' unrest,
  Where still their armies gather for the test,
And heavy darkness holds about the throne.

And shall they sow forever in this wise,
  To reap that corn whose roots take hold on Hell?
    Better a desert and the sunlight there,
In which the lions gaze with stony eyes
  From nameless ruins where the lizards dwell,
    And the small hawk floats lonely on the air.

TO THE ALLIED ARMS

Where children slept, gun answers unto gun;
  Where peace was on the orchards, armies fight;
  Now burst, on vale and devastated height,
The tides that raven and the seas that stun.
Yet wage ye now the battles of the sun
  And with a holy ray your flags are bright,
  Tho deep on Europe lies the two-fold night
Of pain's despair and death's oblivion.

More clear, more terrible, the days reveal
  What foe is yours, and how malignly vast
    The horror and betrayal of its plan—
That tyranny which rears its crest of steel
  To blot the Future's blue, a shadow cast
    By Hell's red star on Liberty and Man.

THE BATTLEFIELD AT NIGHT

When on war's wounded falls the final sleep,
  How beautiful shall silence be to those
  On whom till then the sounds of carnage close
And tramping billows of the conflict sweep!
A camp unsentineled that host shall keep,
  Nor countersign reveal its friends and foes;
  And in that zone of death shall be repose
More kind than love, and than the dark more deep.

But now unceasing thunders tread the night,
'Mid flamings and cessations of the light,
  And the faint sense delays ere death to hark
    The bellowing of guns against the sky,
    And, as the decimating cannon cry,
  The mangled horses screaming in the dark.

KINGSHIP

Mercy and peace how many warring years
The sons of men have sought, and sought in vain!
Ever was one who found the spur and rein—
The monarch, girt around with servile spears.
Caesars and sultans, princes and emirs
Have made an earth demoniac with pain.
The throne is like an island in the main,
And that deep sea the sea of human tears.

O Spirit of the world, is this thy truth,
And this thine answer to our questionings?
Shalt thou be god or devil in our sight,
Beholding mighty nations and their youth
Betrayed into the feeble hands of kings?
Feeble, but ah! the flame of war they light!

THE DEATH OF RUPERT BROOKE

Poets of England, where are you to-day?
If I, removed by nigh three hundred years
From English soil, share thus your hopes and fears,
And, young no longer, plan to join the fray,
What swords are at your gates, that you delay
Your passage to the thundering frontiers?
The heart of Bruce was hurled beyond the spears,
And one as great hath shown you now the way.

Say not, "Why place a weapon in his hand?"
Say not, "He could have written many a book,
To render better service to his land."
There comes a time when sterner things must be,
And all the words of Byron and of Brooke
Match not the stand they took for liberty.

THE HELOTS

Now the grim lords of Europe have their will,
And war is on the world, and war's despair.
The monster that they nurtured with such care
At battle's crimson river drinks its fill,
And the rent veins of men cease not to spill,
And the red fangs cease not to pierce and tear,
And the mad ranks press ever on, and bare
Their bosoms, that its food be given still.

Such is the price, O brothers, that ye pay
For tyrant, prince and war-lord; thus your fate
To madman and to despot is consigned.
In peace, ye toil that folly have its way;
In war, ye bleed in misery and hate;
In war or peace, ye labor deaf and blind.

THE CROWN-PRINCE AT VERDUN

By Mars his hilt! this is a royal sport,
  And fit amusement for a king-to-be!
  Surely the revels now permitted thee
Excel the poor diversions of a court!
Against the tireless thunder of the fort
  Thy ranks go forth as waves upon a sea—
  Puppets and pawns that move at thy decree.
A merry game, but mayst thou find it short!

Or is it as a painter that thy skill
  Favors the world?—daubing with red the snow,
As on the mighty canvas of a hill
    Thy cannon spread the pigments, till the whole
  Stands perfect, and applauding armies know
    The vision of the Hell that waits thy soul.

BEFORE DAWN IN AMERICA

Slowly the hours beyond the midnight crawl.
  Far on the frozen night a train goes by.
  I know there is no starlight in the sky,
But that concealing fog is over all,
Alike for stars and men a somber pall.
  Remoter now, a cold, mechanic cry
  Is signal, and the poplars stir and sigh,
As ranks that wait in vain the trumpet's call.

Now breaks the day on Belgium and France.
  Over the shoulder of the world, I know
  What rubrics gleam on the recording snow
    (That page of Heaven's book that lay so pure!)
As, votive to the race's huge mischance,
    Men die, O Liberty! that thou endure.

GUN-PRACTICE

SAN FRANCISCO

Dull, on the somber headlands of the Gate,
  Where morning winds of the Pacific go,
  The giant mortars toll, pulsed blow on blow
As of a mace that in the grasp of Fate
Swings, and the thundering coasts reverberate.
  To silence now the vast vibrations flow,
  Where burns the sun on seas without a foe
And the far cliffs rise cold and desolate.

But in this heart aware of good and ill,
  The grave and mighty echoes persevere,
    Till now the vision that is mine transmutes
The speech of cannon, and a whisper chill
  Sinks as the hiss of serpents in mine ear:
    "Sons of destruction, ye are yet as brutes!"

ON THE GREAT WAR

TO ENGLAND

O mighty Mother of our heart and mind!
  We, sons of thine in vision and in deed,
  Gaze eastward, where our brothers toil and bleed,
And hear thy battle-music on the wind.
Behold! we gaze, who are to thee as blind,
  And listen, seeming deaf to all thy need,
  But in our hearts what ancient Voices plead!
What clarions echo, calling kind to kind!

We are a folk of many hearths and hates,
  Fretted with alien counsels, and unsure;
    Yet some there be who know our war is one,
And strain upon the barrier of our Fates,
  And scorn the coward twilight that endures
    Between our darkness and thy noonday sun.

CIVILIZATION AT BAY

Can there be one whose blood from England finds
  Nurture and scource, who sees her war to-day
  And yearns not for the liberative fray?
If such a one there be, what darkness blinds.
His vision, or what craft of cunning minds
  Have made that vision their corrupted prey?
  Now is the season of the world's dismay,
And now a cry goes forth on all the winds.

Now calls the Lioness, and one by one
  Her whelps make answer, east and south and west;
    But thou, the greatest of that royal line,
  America! dost slumber in the sun,
    Nor loose the allegiant thunder in thy breast,
    Nor dream what world-derision shall be thine.

THE DAY OF DECISION

Now is that tiger loosened on mankind
  Whose fangs, if here undrawn, all men shall feel,
  Till wounds be given that ages cannot heal.
And thou, America! thou standest blind!
What! wilt thou wait till Hell has undermined
  The fane of Freedom, and her columns reel?—
  Wait till annunciating throats of steel
Declare thy doom upon the poisoned wind?

Or if thou waitest till the Beast is bound,
  As lesser peoples wage thy war for thee,
In what appraisement shall thy name be found?
    Shall not they cry: "We fought to save a world,
  Thou guarding past the desecrated sea
    Thy calloused patience and thy colors furled!"

BROADWAY, NEW YORK, 1916

Indifferent to a world in agony,
The drunken wasters crowd the cabaret,
Whose midnight orgies end but with the day.
O Liberty, are these the fruits of thee—
This swarm of vampires that the dark sets free,
To batten upon murder, and decay?
Are these our masters and the race their prey,
And hast thou long to live when such things be?

So in the wake of war do jackals come
To feast on those that perish in thy name,
And when the wounded breasts at last are dumb,
To howl exultant to the setting moon,
Till, frightened by the sun's returning flame,
They scamper to their holes and sleep by noon.

THE "LUSITANIA"

Above her grave the dipping sea-gulls cry
  To swift companion or to tireless mate;
  The impassive sea lies blue and desolate,
Whose vacant shires reflect the vacant sky;
And ocean-winds pass on without a sigh,
  Fugitive, aimless, uncompassionate.
  Below, for witnesses of bestial hate,
The bones and memories of our murdered lie.

For do we still remember? Now the year
  Brings back the date of their unhappy day,
    And still the butcher and his lords go free—
Go free, nor trouble to conceal the sneer
  For us whose irresponsive hearts betray
    The vast indifference of heaven and sea.

WAR

THE PAST

In that abyss what monsters greet the sight!
  Then were the fertile leisures of the sage,
  And stony Art saw then her Golden Age;
But nation upon nation in that night,
With flame to blast and savage steel to smite,
  Fell fiendlike, drunken with the battle-rage,
  And Time's red arm upholds a bloody page
Before the revelation of the light.

The dreadful heritage is on us yet:
  Rapine and tears and torment and despair—
The murder-stains wherewith our hands are wet.
    Still round us rise the dungeons of the Past,
  The crypt abominable whence we fare
    Slowly, ah! slowly to the light at last.

WAR

THE PRESENT

They will not pause for counsel. Deadly wings
  Take now the skies, and the horizons slay
  With hands invisible, and warships sway
To billows broken by their thunderings.
So wrought the lands where now the desert flings
  A pall of sand on columns that decay;
  And whose the realm none knows unto this day,
Nor knows the Wrath that smote its cruel kings.

Is this the wholesome blue, the heavens of night
  Whose eastern star the wise men had for guide?
Found they the Prince of Peace below its light?
    That orb hath set. Swift from its holy place
  With level wings the pampered vultures slide,
    As morning glimmers on a dead man's face.

WAR

THE FUTURE

Be beautiful, O morning's feet of gold,
  Upon the mountains of that time to be!
  Be swift, O dayspring that shall set us free
From all the blinding tyrannies of old!
Thine are the years by seer and bard foretold,
  And thine the judgment driven as a sea
  On man's high-treason to humanity.
Thine is the sun their armies shall behold.

O ranks that serve the future and the Right,
  How fair your conquests and how high your wars,
When, bathed in that deliverance of light,
    Your swords are lifted against pain and wrong,
  And, ere man's House be builded toward the stars,
    Ye lay its deep foundations with a song!